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Sermon on the Gospel of Trinity Sunday.*

JOHN 3, 1—15.

IN CHRIST JESUS BELOVED FRIENDS:

To-day is Trinity Sunday. On this Sunday we praise and glorify the Lord, our God, for His mercy and love in having revealed Himself to us through His holy Word. Without this revelation no man would and could know God, but now we know who He is and how we must worship Him. From God's own revelation we know Him to be a Triune God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one undivided and indivisible essence, and as the Holy Trinity we praise and worship Him, ever saying, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

Such knowledge and worship of the true God is necessary for man's eternal salvation. Jews, Mohammedans, and heathen who know not the Triune God, and all those so-called Christians who believe not in the Holy Trinity, cannot be saved. The God whom they worship is not God, but an idol; for there is no other God but one, and this One has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and He only can give to men eternal life and salvation.

To be saved it is not sufficient to believe that there is a God, or to worship a vague "Supreme Being," but you must know the true God, and worship Him in spirit and in truth. Nay, even to know who the true God is and to confess with your lips that He is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is not sufficient unto salva-

* Compare Dr. Walther's *Predigtentwuerfe*, p. 110 sqq.

tion. If you would be saved you must, rather, with all your heart believe in the true and living God as *your* God, and sing praises unto the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as *your* Creator, *your* Redeemer, and *your* Comforter.

However, my friends, before anyone is able to join in this true worship of the true God, something else is necessary, something of which Christ, our Lord, speaks in the Gospel lesson of this Sunday. A great change must be wrought in man's natural state and condition. Man must be regenerated, or born again, as Christ says, who speaks about this most important matter to Nicodemus, a certain ruler of the Jews, who came to Him by night for a religious conversation. Let us also now listen to His words, and mark especially His repeated solemn declaration:

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!"

Let us learn,

- I. *To whom Christ says these words, and*
- II. *What He means to say by them.*

I.

Our Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus does not only say in a general way: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,*" but He addresses Himself to Nicodemus in particular, saying: "*Ye must be born again.*" He thus gives him to understand that what He said of all others is particularly true of him also. He wants Nicodemus to know that he in his present condition could not be saved, that he could not see the kingdom of God, nor enter into it, *except he be born again.*

Now if we bear in mind what kind of man this man Nicodemus was, we will learn to whom Christ says the words: "*Ye must be born again!*" Who was Nicodemus? Was he a man that had heretofore led a disgraceful life before men in willful sin, vice, and shame? No, he was nothing of the kind. He was no thief, or murderer, or adulterer, or drunkard, nor any such thing. On the contrary, as one of the Pharisees he had always led a decent and an honorable life before men, and there was no blame of any kind attached to his character and good reputation. Yet Christ says even to such a man as he was: "*Ye must be born again,*" and unless this be done, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

But what, then, was lacking in Nicodemus that could still place him outside the kingdom of God? Was he perhaps so *ignorant* a man, and had he been so careless of acquiring the most necessary

knowledge concerning God and His Word that on this account he could not see the kingdom of God? On the contrary, he was a master, *i. e.*, a teacher, in Israel, and a ruler of the Jews, and in this capacity a man well versed in the sacred teachings of the Bible. From his childhood days he learned Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, and was, no doubt, better acquainted with them than many among us. Yet even to this man with such a religious training, even to this master in Israel, Christ here says: “*Ye must be born again.*”

Well, perhaps the fault with this man was, that although he knew all these things, he *believed none of them*; perhaps he was a man who openly despised God and the religion that he had learned, so that for this reason he could not enter into God’s kingdom without being first born again? But no, that was not the case either. He openly confessed faith in the God of Israel and in the teachings of Moses and the Prophets. Nor was he one of those Pharisees who from malice opposed and rejected Christ, but he rather defended Him against their malicious attacks, esteemed Him highly, and cheerfully said to Him: “*Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.*” Yet to this apparently true believer and sincere confessor of Christ the Lord says: “*Ye,*” even you, Nicodemus, “*must be born again,*” otherwise you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

What, then, was wanting in this master of Israel that Christ should speak thus even to him? We will learn it by following more closely the conversation he held with Christ. When Jesus said to him: “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,*” what did he do? Did he then act according to his own confession that Jesus were a teacher come from God? Did he then humbly sit down at this divine Teacher’s feet to hear from Him what he must do to be saved? Was he ready to receive Jesus’ words as the wisdom of God unto salvation? He evidently was not. However highly he esteemed Christ as an eminent teacher, he was not ready to simply accept what He said. His own reason, his own wisdom and knowledge set itself in opposition to Christ’s heavenly teachings. What Jesus said about being born again appeared as foolishness unto him, and almost sneeringly he answered: “*How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*” And when Jesus proceeded to further explain this matter to him, he again answered and said unto Him: “*How can these things be?*”—This, then, is one thing that was still wanting in this master of Israel: he had not yet learned to

submit his own human reason, his own knowledge and wisdom, to the word and wisdom of God. He would believe only what he could understand, and rather followed the dictates of his reason than the teachings of God's Word; and as long as he continued in that state of mind there remained even for him the necessity of being born again before he could enter into the kingdom of God.

But there was yet another thing wanting in Nicodemus. We are told in the beginning of our text that this ruler of the Jews came to Jesus *by night*. What did he do that for? Why did he not come in the light of day even as the disciples and other followers of Jesus did? There can be but one reason for this strange action. Nicodemus was not yet ready to openly confess Christ as the Lord and Savior of mankind. He still feared the mockery and enmity of men, especially of his wicked colleagues in the Jewish council, if he should let them know that he showed any respect for Christ. He still cared more for honor before men than for the honor before God, and could not make up his mind to forsake all and take up the cross to follow Christ. He had not yet fully decided for Christ and against the world, and while he wanted to be no enemy of God he would, at the same time, not lose the friendship of the world. As he had not yet learned to submit his own reason and wisdom to the word and wisdom of God, so he was yet equally unwilling to bring his own will under subjection to the will and word of God. This, then, is the other reason for which Christ says even to Nicodemus: "*Ye must be born again.*"

Learn from all this, then, my friends, to whom Christ says these words and for whom He declares it absolutely necessary that they must be born again. He says it to all those who, being still like Nicodemus, will not fully and entirely submit both their reason and their will to the Word of God. Or, in other words, He says it to all those who have not yet become true and sincere Christians.

You all, therefore, who will not simply believe and accept what the Bible teaches you, but still ask like Nicodemus: "*How can these things be?*" now doubting this and then rejecting that blessed doctrine of the Bible, because you cannot make it harmonize with your own reason, nor with the ideas and opinions of men: you, and all of your kind, are the people to whom Christ says: "*Ye must be born again.*"

And again you all, who are not yet willing to fully abandon all sin, to forsake the world, and to follow Christ; who, like Nicodemus, prefer the honor of men to the honor before God; who yet refuse to be a separate people from the children of this world, but

mingle with them and join them in their sinful pursuits and practices, who still permit sin in any shape or form to have dominion over you, and continue to live in willful wickedness: know it, and bear it in mind, you, you are the people to whom Christ says: “*Ye must,*” aye, you *must*, “*be born again,*” or remain forever outside the kingdom of God. All else will not help you. Your knowledge of God will not help you; your lip-worship of God will not help you; your respectability before men will not help you; only one thing can help you: *You must be born again!*

And now, let me, in the second place, also briefly show you what Christ means to say by these words.

II.

By our natural birth from human parents we have, my friends, our natural life, our body and soul, our natural sensations and faculties and inclinations, in short, our nature and being. Now, when Christ says to us: “*Ye must be born again,*” what can He thereby mean to say but this: A great change must be brought about in your entire nature and being, not indeed a physical but a spiritual change. You must be so transformed in your heart, mind, and soul as to become altogether new creatures. As you have been born into your bodily life, so you must now be born also unto a new spiritual life and become endowed with new spiritual faculties, with new spiritual powers both of your intellect and will. In a word, you must become altogether different beings from what you are by nature. This, indeed, is what Christ means to say by the words: “*Ye must be born again.*” “*That which is born of the flesh,*” says Christ, “*is flesh,*” i. e., by nature and our natural birth our whole being is sinful and wicked. Our *understanding* is darkened, so that we know not God, nor perceive the things of the Spirit of God; our *will* is perverted, so that we cannot serve God; all our inclinations are towards that which is evil; we are carnally minded and full of enmity against God. Thus are we “*flesh born of the flesh,*” and remaining such we cannot enter into the kingdom of God. This our natural state and condition must be changed by the gracious workings of the Holy Spirit. “*That which is born of the Spirit,*” Christ says, “*is spirit,*” and by the Spirit of God only can that necessary change in our heart and nature be brought about which makes us acceptable to God and capable of entering into His heavenly kingdom.

But how is this brought about? By what means does the Holy Spirit accomplish a man’s regeneration, or new birth? The means He employs is the *Word of God;* by it He works especially two

things in the hearts of men, to bring about their new birth. The first is, a clear knowledge of their sinfulness and damnableness in the sight of God, and sincere sorrow on account of it; and the other is, true faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior and Deliverer from sin, death, and damnation.

Of these two things Christ therefore also reminds Nicodemus, to show him how, and how alone, his new birth might be brought about. In the first place He says to him: "*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven,*" *i. e.*, Try what you may, even you, though you are a master in Israel, cannot bring yourself to heaven; you are a sinful being, lost and condemned, and can never make yourself acceptable to God, nor attain life and salvation by any own works or efforts. But, in the second place, Christ shows him where there is help for him, saying: "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" To Him, the Lord would say, to Him who came into this world to save sinners, and who shall bear the world's sins on the cross, to Him, O Nicodemus, you must look up for help and salvation. Believing in Him you shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

These, then, are the two things which the Holy Spirit, by the power of God's Word, would also work in our hearts. He would lead us to a clear knowledge of our natural sinfulness and depravity and to a firm conviction of our utter helplessness and damnableness; and again He would work in us a true and living faith in the Savior Jesus Christ, a faith that would look up to Him who was crucified for our sins, and repose in Him only for help and salvation.

Oh, let us herein follow the Holy Spirit's promptings and pleadings! If, as poor, lost, and condemned sinners, we look up to Christ crucified, we shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The moment we, by sincere repentance and faith, come to Jesus Christ, our Savior, the gates of the kingdom of heaven are open unto us, that we may now enter in: for then our *new birth* is accomplished; by faith in Jesus Christ we are born again; we have then verily become new creatures. From that moment on we will submit both our reason and our will unconditionally to the Word of God; we will break asunder the bonds of sin and cast them from us; we will then forsake the world and begin in all sincerity to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. With a true and living faith in Christ Jesus, the Spirit of God has created a new heart within us, and loving God who loved us first we will now no longer live unto ourselves,

but unto our Lord and God. Verily, then we are new creatures; old things have passed away, all things have become new. We are born again and can enter into the kingdom of heaven, there to sing in all eternity: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, our Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter, one true God, now and forever. Amen, so help us God! Amen. G. J. W.

Ordination Sermon.

GEN. 24, 31.

The office of the Christian ministry is a high and holy office, because it is instituted of God and has for its end and object the glory of God and the eternal salvation of souls. Therefore St. Paul writes to Timothy: "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." The work of an evangelical minister is a good work, good in itself, good in the sight of God, good for the souls of men, good also for the minister himself, provided he is found faithful. Therefore the Scriptures give high encomiums to this office. They do not only pronounce it good, they call it an honor, saying: "No man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Unto this high and holy office you, my brother, have been called of God through His church, and therefore I say unto you: "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.*"

To set apart those called of God through the church for the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands and prayer has been customary ever since the days of the apostles. Therefore you should remember well what ordination is. It is not an ordinance instituted by God. Nowhere do the Scriptures say that men must be set apart to this office by the laying on of hands. Much less do they say that ordination confers the office itself. It is the calling of God through the church which confers the office. Yet this does not make ordination something indifferent or useless. Thus St. Paul writes to Timothy: "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." In like manner Paul had before exhorted him: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." The man who enters on this office in the fear of God, and upon whom the blessing of God is invoked by the fervent, effectual prayer of righteous men may cheerfully trust that

God will endow him with the needed gifts, and will be his very present help and his reward throughout his ministry.

You having been duly called by this congregation, therefore I, a minister of Christ and an officer of the church, desire to greet you with the words of Laban to Eliezer: "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, wherefore standest thou without?*" Let me briefly remind you

- I. *What you yourself are to be, and*
- II. *For what purpose you should enter the ministry.*

I.

Meeting Eliezer, Laban, the brother of Rebecca, invited him with the words: "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.*" Why was Eliezer a man blessed of the Lord? Was he not a sinner? Certainly, he was a man like others. The minister of Christ is a sinner, as well as others. While it is true that men who have been guilty of transgressions which disgrace them before the world are not to be put into the ministry, yet the minister of Christ is of the common stock of Adam, flesh born of the flesh, even as others. He is subject to like affections and temptations as are others, and with Luther in the Catechism he must confess of himself: "*We daily sin much, and deserve nothing but punishment.*"

Yet Eliezer was rightly called "blessed of the Lord," because he had the faith of Abraham, believing the promise of forgiveness and righteousness in the woman's Seed. To be blessed of the Lord you must enter the ministry as a poor and penitent, yet a believing and justified sinner, and I charge you this day that throughout all your ministry you remain a poor sinner in your own esteem, a man who must daily seek the forgiveness of sin in the blood of the Lamb which was slain. Nothing is more diametrically opposed to the spirit in which a Christian minister is to labor than pride of heart and a self-righteous sentiment. How is a proud man to feel with the contrite and the broken-hearted? How is one who thinks himself rich to be in sympathy with the poor in heart and to bring them the comfortings of the Gospel as it should be done? You are yet young, life is before you, honors may be in store for you, and the temptation to pride and self-exaltation will scarcely be spared you. Then remember what I have told you this day: "*A proud man has not the Spirit of Christ, and therefore he cannot be in inner touch with the true disciples of Him who said: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."*" This, indeed, is the first, the most necessary requirement to qualify a man for the ministry, more needful than learning and skill, that he himself be a Christian at heart, an humble follower of Jesus.

"The husbandman that laboreth," says Paul, "must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say."

But why should Eliezer have been welcomed to the house of Bethuel? He was a servant, not a lord. No, a minister is not to be a lord. You are not to come in to lord it over God's heritage, you are to come in for service, as Peter exhorts his fellow elders: "Not as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." And Paul says: "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus, the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." The minister is not the ruler over the church, he is only the steward. Come in, then, to do the service of a steward.

But Eliezer was Abraham's steward and in this errand the messenger of a mighty man and in this capacity well worthy to be received with honor and respect. You are not to be the servant of men, so as to pander to their whims, or to shape your preaching after the itching of their ears. It is written: "Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men." Come in as the servant of the Lord, the messenger of Jesus Christ. In all your ministrations, in what you do and what you leave undone, it must be your aim to please Him in whose service you stand. As Abraham had taken an oath from Eliezer when sending him upon his errand, so you to-day vow to be a true minister of Jesus Christ, a faithful steward over God's mysteries, to give to every soul entrusted to your care its portion of meat in due season. And trusting that you make this vow not with the lips only, but with all your heart I say unto you: "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without?*"

II.

And now let me ask: What was Eliezer's errand? Why was he in Mesopotamia, so many hundred miles from Canaan? His mission was, to win a bride for his master Isaac, Abraham's son. You, my brother, are on a similar mission; you are to woo and to win a bride for your Master's Son.

What is the object of the Christian ministry? Men enter the ministry from various motives. Some become preachers, because they count it an honorable and a good way of making a living. Some enter the ministry looking for easy days, and some go to preaching for money. Now the Lord did ordain, "that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." A congregation which is well able to support a pastor and yet will allow a faithful servant of Christ to suffer for the necessities of life is not worth a true steward, and is served right if it falls into the hands of a hire-

ling. But woe unto the man who is a preacher for the sake of the hire, or for honor, ease, or popularity with men; for in the day of reckoning such hirelings must flee from the face of the Lord. Unhappy the preacher who shows the way of life to others and himself does not travel it, who preaches the Gospel to others while his own conscience convicts him that he himself is not a Christian. While preaching to others let us take heed lest we ourselves become castaways.

You are sent to woo and to win a bride for the heavenly Bridegroom, the Son of the Father. The Lord of heaven wants souls to whom He can say: "I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." Behold, the Lord already has a company of souls at this place to whom He has betrothed Himself, and He has called you to take care of this His bride, to comfort her in her trials, and to teach her to nestle ever more closely to the bosom of her Groom. And the Lord wants more souls at this place to whom He can betroth Himself, and He has sent you to woo and to win them for Him. O a great, a noble, a precious work! A work worth working for. Was it not an honorable errand on which Eliezer was sent? The journey was far; he had to pass through deserts and had to endure hardships, but oh, the joy when he returned! Must we not assume that Isaac held Eliezer as a friend and no more a servant the rest of his days?

Those who talk of the easy life of preachers know not what they say. Hirelings, indeed, take it easy, but the true servant of the Lord must endure trials, temptations, afflictions, which often try him in the depths of his soul; for Satan is his enemy, and the world is not his friend. But what are all the hardships of the journey compared with the joy at the journey's end? The world with its pleasures, its riches, its honors passeth away, but on the day when the worldling's joy is turned into sorrow, then the true servant of Christ who has sown in tears will come with joy bringing his sheaves with him. To woo and to win souls for Christ is an object worth living for, and what a grand thing it will be when the Bridegroom will come and we can say, Lord, Thou didst send me into Thy harvest and here is the sheaf which I have reaped. On that day when conquerors, monarchs, philosophers, the great and the wise of the world will call on the rocks to fall on them, then He will say unto His faithful laborers: Come in now, ye blessed of my Father. Ye have been faithful over a few things, and I will make you rulers over many things. Come in, therefore, thou blessed of

the Lord, come in to the work of the ministry. Watch thou in all things; endure hardships; do the work of an evangelist; make full proof of thy ministry; faint not, and in due time thou shalt reap and shalt rest.

And you, the members of this congregation, I charge you, As Laban did to Eliezer, so do you say to your new pastor: "*Come in, thou blessed of the Lord.*" You yourselves have conferred the office upon him, and you should verily receive him as the minister and the messenger of Jesus Christ. See that none of you despise him because of his youth, lest despising him you despise his Master. Give him the honor due the servant of Christ, and remember, the right and most profitable way to receive a pastor is to receive him as the messenger of Christ with a heart open for the Word of Truth which he preaches, and which is able to save the soul. Remember to do according to the command of the Lord by His holy apostle saying: "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves." And may the grace of God abide with you and abound in you more and more, that your church may shine as a light and become like unto a city upon a hill which may not be hid. Amen.

F. K.

Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

Trinity Sunday.

JOHN 3, 1—15.

At the first glance this Gospel lesson does not seem to fit at all to the occasion. This is the festival of the Holy Trinity, and not with one syllable does this Gospel lesson seem to declare the fact that there is but one God and that there are three persons in the deity. It contains a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. The subject of this conversation, however, was not the Holy Trinity, but regeneration. Still, we shall see that, though our text does not dwell on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity as such, it distinctly teaches a Triune God, and is otherwise a most suitable text for the occasion.—There is a great difference between this festival and the rest of our Christian festivals. We celebrate all the rest of our Christian festivals in commemoration of a divine deed or fact. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost. There is no divine deed to be discoursed upon to-day. It is a divine *doctrine*, the only doctrine which has been made the theme and subject of a Christian festival. Why was

this done? Because by the profession of this doctrine the Christian Church was saved from destruction. Arius, the Council of Nice, Athanasius. Ever since the Council of Nice those have been considered outside of the pale of the Christian Church who do not believe in the Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Let me speak of

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY, and show,

- I. *That the Holy Trinity is as great a mystery as regeneration;*
- II. *That faith in the Triune God is indispensable for salvation.*

I.

a. Regeneration a mystery, v. 1—9. *α.* Regeneration and the necessity thereof. By nature man is an abomination in the sight of God, flesh born of flesh, that is, a sinner by birth, and as long as he remains in this natural state God, on account of His perfect holiness, cannot receive him into His kingdom. No matter how good you are in your own sight and in the sight of others, how faultless your life, how strictly you keep yourself within the precincts of common morality, that does not make you acceptable with God. To be admitted into God's kingdom you must be born again, undergo a complete radical change, a change that does not merely affect the outer life, but a change of heart, a change so great that it amounts to a new birth, as if your old natural self had passed away and a new person had come forth in place of your old self. No human means can avail to bring about this spiritual birth. God alone can do it, John 1, 13. He does it through His Word, 1 Pet. 1, 23, and in Baptism, v. 5. Tit. 3, 5. *β.* Regeneration a mystery. To know what regeneration is, you must experience the new birth yourself. Even the greatest skeptics cannot deny the wonderful change in those who have been truly converted from the power of Satan to the living God, but how this change is effected, how the Spirit of God performs in sinful man the great work of regeneration, this is a mystery which no man can solve.

b. The Holy Trinity a mystery. *α.* The Bible distinctly teaches one God, Deut. 6, 4. 1 Cor. 8, 4. Eph. 4, 6. 1 Tim. 2, 8; and three persons, Matt. 3, 16. 28, 19. 1 John 5, 7. This doctrine is clearly set forth in the Athanasian Creed. We must guard against misconceptions as to the word "persons." The three persons are not three different beings; God is one Being; but all we mean to say by the word "persons" is that they differ one from another. *β.* But this doctrine cannot be explained to the satisfaction of human reason.

It is above our human understanding. It is a mystery, and all we can do is to bring our thoughts into captivity and to exclaim with Paul, "O the depth," etc., Rom. 11, 33.

II. Faith in the Triune God is indispensable for salvation,
v. 10—15.

a. Do you notice how the Lord Jesus emphasizes faith in this second part of the Gospel lesson? how He censures Nicodemus for not believing Him even in earthly things? how He demands for eternal salvation simple faith, such as was the faith of the Israelites in the wilderness who looked up to the serpent of brass, and lived? And does not our Gospel lesson distinctly mention the three persons in whom we must believe, the Father, v. 2, the Son, v. 4, the Holy Ghost, vv. 5. 6. 8?

b. And such faith in the Triune God is indispensable for salvation. Athanasian Creed. How can you be saved without faith in God the Father who has begotten the Son from eternity and has sent Him into the world to accomplish your redemption? How can you be saved without faith in God the Son who was begotten of the Father from eternity and who, by His active and passive obedience, has wrought out your salvation? How can you be saved without faith in God the Holy Ghost who from eternity proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who calls you by the Gospel, enlightens you with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps you in the one true faith? Every one of the three persons takes an actual part in the work of our salvation.

CONCLUSION. Let us not be deceived by those who attempt to shatter our faith in the Triune God, the so-called higher critics, who in our days reproduce the same arguments against the faith in the Triune God which were defeated as early as A. D. 325. Let us heed Paul's warning, 1 Tim. 6, 20. 21.

Let God the Father be adored,
And God the Son, the only Lord,
And God the Holy Spirit be
Adored throughout eternity. Amen.

H. S.

Second Sunday after Trinity.

LUKE 14, 16—24.

Just as it is the fool, and the fool only, who says in his heart, "There is no God," so it is the fool, and the fool only, who can deny that man owes reverence and worship to a Higher Being. In other words, no man that has his eyes open to the workings of the

world around him and gives but the slightest hearing to the still, small voice within him can fail to know that his soul must pay homage to something to which it clings and which is to it as god. No people has ever been discovered, even among the most debased and benighted of mankind, that has not some idea of religious worship, some acknowledgment of this inborn craving for and obligation to a Higher Being. Of course, the originally increased knowledge of the true God and of the worship due Him was greatly weakened by the Fall, and since that time has been so woefully darkened that men have sunk even to worshiping dumb brutes or the idols of their own hands, worshiping them often with the most hideous and cruel ceremonies. To Adam and Eve, and then to succeeding generations, God gave the revelation of His being and will and also the promise of the feast to be prepared in the Messiah. Later, through the Savior Himself, then through the Apostles, and then through the preachers of the Word at all times God has shown, and still shows, what is the way into the Father's house, what is the true worship. The invitation to the Gospel feast is extended to all who come within the sound of the Word, and it shows the only way in which the hunger and thirst of the soul can be stilled. Do all men heed the call? The sorrowful fact that they do not is the burden of the Savior's parable for to-day. The behavior of many is characterized by the request:

"I PRAY THEE, HAVE ME EXCUSED."

I. *By whom is this request made?*

Connection and occasion of parable: Jesus invited to a feast in Pharisee's house where they watched Him; He had rebuked them for their strained and pitiless observance of the Sabbath and also for their pride and selfishness. Then one of the guests sought to turn the conversation into a more pleasant channel, while utilizing the feast to point a spiritual moral as the Savior had been doing. Therefore, he said: "Blessed is he," etc., v. 15, with manifest insinuation that all Israelites would share in the kingdom of the Messiah. Thereupon, Jesus points out the painful truth by means of a parable.

a. This request is made by those who have had ample opportunity to accept the invitation. In fact, their begging to be excused indicates that they feel that they have been invited and that some excuse is necessary. Their conscience tells them that God wants them to come. a. Such were the Jews who, on the whole, made such excuse. Despite the various impressive invitations given to them from the earliest times they refused to come to the feast pre-

pared in the Messiah. β . Such are many to-day who have the pure Word, have heard the invitation in its most pleasing and persuasive form.

b. What has been said of the rejection of the Gospel invitation applies also to negligence in attending church services, carelessness about partaking of sacraments, and failure to perform other church duties. Every public service, every celebration of the sacraments is a part of the Gospel feast and it is God's will that we, who are invited, should attend. But how many, time and again, make the request: "I pray thee," etc., though for aught they know they may be missing the last opportunity they will have on earth to respond. Such behavior is, in so far, a despising of the invitation, for God has instituted all these things for them.

II. *How is such request supported?*

a. Vv. 18. 19. "The cares for my material possessions will not permit it." "In my business a man cannot be a Christian." "I have to work too hard to give time or thought to being a Christian." The reasons urged are, of course, vain. The inspecting of the piece of ground and the proving of the oxen could have been deferred; no one has ever lost any substantial good by seeking *first* the kingdom of God. Christianity does not unfit one for legitimate business.

b. V. 20. "The ties and affections by which I am bound to others will not allow me to be a Christian." The ties of kinship, the love for those dependent on them, the desire for the company of others keep many from following the Gospel invitation and plunge them into business enterprises, into societies, into companionship with which they should have nothing to do. All the connections that men make in this world should be hallowed by the fear and love of God, and no such relation can interfere with a man's following the Gospel call. It was not demanded of the man in the parable that he forsake his wife in order to accept the invitation. Christianity does not interfere with such God-approved relation as is found, for instance, in the family. Churches, such as the Romish, that demand or recommend the severance of such ties are anti-christian.

c. Such excuses made for laxness in church attendance, neglect of the sacraments, and the like, are vain and invalid.

III. *What are the results of such requests?*

a. V. 24. Those men who despised the invitation are excluded for good; they of whom it would never have been expected, vv. 21—23, are brought in. Then, when after a short season, farm and oxen and wife must be left behind, what will those men have?

Theirs will be the lot of the rich man of whom we heard in the Gospel lesson for the past Sunday.

b. Those who carelessly and needlessly absent themselves from church services and the sacraments should take warning. Disobedience of God's will does not remain unpunished. Spiritual life does not grow as it should, and in the hour of trial its fatal weakness may be discovered. Bad habit of staying away from the sanctuary is formed and soon grows strong. Offense is given to the brethren. Occasion is given to those outside to scoff, and a stumbling-block is placed in the way of such as may be feeling drawn to come into the church.

G. A. R.

Miscellaneous.

The preacher ought to acquire and cultivate a homiletical habitude. Preaching is his business. For this he has educated himself, and to this he has consecrated his whole life. It should, therefore, obtain undisputed possession of his mind and his culture. . . . This homiletical habit will appear in a disposition to skeletonize, to construct plans, to examine and criticise discourses with respect to their logical structure. The preacher's mind becomes habitually organic. It is inclined to build. Whenever leading thoughts are brought into the mind, they are straightway disposed and arranged into the unity of a plan, instead of being allowed to lie here and there, like scattered boulders on a field of drift. This homiletic habit will appear again in a disposition to render all the argumentative and illustrative materials, which pour in upon the educated man, . . . subservient to the purposes of preaching. The sermonizer is, or should be, a student, and an industrious one; a reader, and a thoughtful one. . . . The possession of such an intellectual habit as this greatly facilitates immediate preparation for the pulpit. It is, virtually, a primary preparation, from which the secondary and more direct preparation derives its precision, thoroughness, rapidity, and effectiveness. (Shedd, *Homiletics*.)

The study of sermons is not only very useful with reference to the art of sermonizing, but affords much valuable material, provided it be not borrowed directly, but assimilated by reflection and made part of one's own thinking. The careful analysis and thorough and repeated examination of a few rich and impressive sermons is much better, in every respect, than the cursory reading of many.

(Broadus, *Preparation and Delivery of Sermons*.)